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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000112

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR
WILLIAMS/SHAMPAINE/STEINGER; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [KHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: HOME DEMOLITIONS IN 2006

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. The Jerusalem Municipality demolished 81 structures, including 63 homes, in East Jerusalem for lack of permits in 2006, according to a report released by the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAHD). Activists from ICAHD and the Israeli human rights NGO Ir Amim argue Palestinians build without legal permits because they cannot afford them and/or cannot obtain them from the GOI bureaucracy. End summary.

2006 Demolitions

12. (C) According to a report released by ICAHD on January 16, the Jerusalem Municipality demolished 63 residential structures and 18 other buildings in East Jerusalem for lack of permits in 2006. According to ICAHD, the Israeli Interior Ministry (which has parallel authority to enforce planning/permit laws) demolished an additional 10 homes, and builders dismantled 10 other homes with pending demolition orders. These figures are slightly lower than the 2005 demolition statistics. (Note: These figures do not include the approximately 250 homes destroyed in West Bank areas adjacent to Jerusalem in 2006. There were no punitive demolitions of the homes of suspected terrorists or criminals in East Jerusalem in 2006. End note.)

13. (C) The Municipality demolished 36 additions, but no houses, for lack of permits in West Jerusalem in 2006. According to the ICAHD report, this is a slight decrease from the number of structures demolished in West Jerusalem in 2005, when 39 additions were destroyed. The report notes that 85 demolition orders were signed for West Jerusalem during that year, of which 45% were implemented. Of the 233 signed demolition orders for structures in East Jerusalem, 191, or 85%, were implemented.

14. (C) According to Municipality documents that former Jerusalem City Councilman Meir Margolit (protect) showed Poloff, Jerusalem used its entire NIS 2,500,000 (\$630,000) demolition budget before the beginning of Ramadan in October 2006, but received a supplemental NIS 500,000 (\$125,000) allocation to continue demolitions until January.

Building Permits Difficult To Get

15. (C) According to ICAHD and Ir Amim, most Palestinians in Jerusalem are very unlikely to receive a building permit, and few risk paying expensive filing, plan submission, design and legal fees. Margolit said these fees start at about 20,000 USD for permits to build a 200 square meter, single-family house, and rise significantly for larger or multi-unit

structures.

¶6. (C) Illegal building in East Jerusalem, according to Danny Seidemann, founder of Ir Amim, and ICAHD coordinator Jeff Halper, is not a political protest against Israeli law, but a practical response to economic and governmental barriers to legal building. Many East Jerusalem residents, Seidemann said, cannot document land title due to poor Ottoman- and Jordanian-era record keeping or comply with increasingly stringent planning restrictions.

WALLES